

TRIBUTE TO KENT OLSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE PROFESSIONAL INSURANCE AGENTS OF NORTH DAKOTA

### HON. EARL POMEROY

OF NORTH DAKOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 17, 2009*

Mr. POMEROY. Madam Speaker, I rise to honor the distinguished career of Kent Olson. I am pleased to have known Kent Olson for the many years he served as the Executive Director of the Professional Insurance Agents of North Dakota working with him on important insurance issues for North Dakota farmers.

Kent Olson is a model of the highest standards of honesty, integrity and professionalism. As Mr. Olson prepares to begin retirement, I want to pay tribute to his leadership of the professional insurance agents in North Dakota focusing on the importance of quality continuing education for its members that translated into excellent service for families and farmers in North Dakota. Throughout the years, quality education for professional insurance agents has been known by one name: Kent Olson.

Among his many achievements, Kent Olson is an expert in crop insurance and has been passionate in support of the key role that crop insurance plays in the farming economy of our state and of our entire nation.

In addition to his work in our state, Kent has contributed his many talents to the national PIA agents association, putting on seminars and getting personally involved every year. His involvement typifies his belief in our democracy and embodies the motto of PIA as being, "Local Agents Serving Main Street America." Kent believes passionately in the value that local professional insurance agents always provide. And with equal passion, he believes that insurance should continue to be regulated by the State, not by the federal government.

I am pleased to note that although Kent will be retiring, he will never give up his passion—whether they are for the Main Street insurance agents, who have come to call him a close friend, or for his family, or for his music.

Kent Olson is one of those people whom everyone respects, and with many good reasons. I have had the pleasure of calling Kent Olson a colleague and a friend, and that will never change.

I am pleased to congratulate and commend Kent Olson on the occasion of his retirement as executive director of the Professional Insurance Agents of North Dakota.

RECOGNIZING AT&T FOR JOBS CREATION AND COMMITMENT TO CLEAN ENERGY

### HON. JOE BACA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 17, 2009*

Mr. BACA. Madam Speaker, in this time of economic uncertainty, I rise to thank one company who is actively working to create new jobs and practice a clean, environmentally friendly business model, AT&T.

Through a new \$18 billion initiative, AT&T is pledging to increase its broadband capacity.

Not only will this initiative increase Internet speed and accessibility for customers, but perhaps more importantly it will create 3,000 new jobs.

Over the next ten years, AT&T also plans to create or save an additional one thousand jobs through a plan to invest \$565 million in replacing its current fleet of vehicles with 15,000 domestically manufactured Compressed Natural Gas and alternative fuel vehicles.

Research shows that this new fleet will save 49 million gallons of gasoline over the next ten years. It also will reduce carbon emissions by 211,000 metric tons in this same time frame.

Madam Speaker, I applaud AT&T for its initiative in taking the lead in the movement to green our economy. Not only will these new initiatives help lead our nation out of its current economic downturn, but they also help to create an environmentally sustainable future for our children and grandchildren to enjoy. These actions set AT&T apart as an exemplary company, and I hope that others will soon follow their lead.

TRIBUTE TO THE OMEGA PSI PHI FRATERNITY

### HON. KENDRICK B. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 17, 2009*

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Madam Speaker, today I rise to recognize my fraternity, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated, the first African-American national fraternal organization to be founded at a historically black college, for their 7th Annual Florida Political Summit in Tallahassee, Florida.

For nearly 100 years, my fraternal brothers have faithfully carried out their mission of fostering the growth of men, both college and post college, by providing an outlet and opportunity to serve the community as set forth by our founders at Howard University, Edgar A. Love, Oscar J. Cooper, Frank Coleman, and Ernest Just.

Since its inception in 1911, Omega Psi Phi brothers have been advocates of taking leadership to prevent violence against women and children in the African-American community, supported efforts of the United Negro College Fund and the Congressional Black Caucus, and most recently partnered with the American Cancer Society and the National Association of Basketball Coaches in Coaches vs. Cancer in empowering basketball coaches, their teams and local communities to make a difference in the fight against cancer.

While attending Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, FAMU, in Tallahassee, Florida, I had the distinct honor of serving as Basileus of the Upsilon Psi Chapter of Omega Psi Phi. My experiences as Basileus have served as the cornerstone in my education and leadership skills that I have carried over into this esteemed Chamber in representing the 17th Congressional District of Florida.

In an esteemed effort to continue Omega Psi Phi's mission, I know the men of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity will discuss their legislative concerns ranging from civil rights, health care reform and veteran's affairs to public education, foreign policy, and economic issues while sharing their experiences and raising awareness of issues affecting our daily lives.

Madam Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to join me in wishing my brothers of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity a successful political summit as these men continue to build a strong and effective force of men dedicated to its Cardinal Principles of manhood, scholarship, perseverance, and uplift.

REMEMBERING THE LIFE OF MUSIC IMPRESARIO RALPH MERCADO

### HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 17, 2009*

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, I rise to ask my colleagues to pause and remember the life of a good friend, Ralph Mercado, the legendary Latin music executive who recently passed away on March 10, 2009. As much an icon as the musicians that he worked with and promoted, Mercado was a visionary innovator who helped popularize tropical music worldwide, including New York's mixture of popular Latin rhythms know as "salsa."

Mercado etched his name in the history books by building a record label whose various components (from a publishing company to a video and film production arm) helped make and take salsa to some of the largest stages around the world. A catalog of award-winning international hits across three decades transformed the Latino music industry, bringing respect not only to talented artists but also providing young Latinos with a way to connect with their parents, their roots and their communities.

It all started in Brooklyn on Sept. 29, 1941. The son of a Dominican dockworker and a Puerto Rican factory worker, Mercado often commented that he learned merengue, the typical dance from the Dominican Republic, in the hallway of the family's fifth-floor walkup as soon as he could walk. He first fell in love with the rhythms while at the Palladium Nightclub when he was only 16, watching the big bands of Machito, Tito Puente and Tito Rodriguez. As a teenager, he was famed for producing "waistline parties" in apartment building basements where a couple's admission was a penny per inch of their dates' waistline.

Using the same concept, he then opened the 3 & 1 Club where he began booking local Latin bands such as Eddie Palmieri and Richie Ray & Bobby Cruz, among many others. This led to Mercado's first management, booking, and promotions company called Showstoppers. He promoted legendary R&B acts that included James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Gladys Knight & the Pips, the Stylistics, the Chi-lites, starting a salsa-soul music trend.

Mercado also continued to open many doors to up and coming artists. He helped to expand the Fania All-Stars, promoted dances at the Cheetah Nightclub, and presented Latin jazz at the Red Garter and, later, at the Village Gate and other downtown venues. His partnership with Jack Hooke, the late Tito Puente's longtime manager, helped create the Salsa Meets Jazz Series at the Village Gate and the Latin Jazz Jam as part of the JVC Jazz Festival.

A great judge of talent, Mercado opened RMM Management in 1972 representing Eddie